
NEWS FROM PETROLEUM EQUIPMENT INSTITUTE



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STOP STATIC CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES

TULSA, Okla. - An international petroleum equipment association today issued motorists a warning to be cautious of static electricity at gasoline pumps, which can potentially cause a fire and result in serious injury and property damage. While the Petroleum Equipment Institute continues to collect data on accidents, it appears that static electricity is most often generated when motorists get back into their vehicles while refueling, said Robert N. Renkes, executive vice president.

"While filling up their vehicles with gasoline, many motorists will return to their cars to stay warm, make a phone call, or retrieve their purse or wallet," he said. "When they slide out of their car, static charge is generated. Then, when they touch the nozzle, a spark can ignite fuel vapors around the nozzle."

Studies indicate these accidents occur mostly during the winter season in cold and dry climate conditions. The Institute has documented more than 150 incidents of static ignition at the fuel pump nationwide, with more than half reported since 1999. It is estimated, however, that there are hundreds of unreported incidents per year.

Accidents are especially prevalent among women. Renkes said he believes women tend to re-enter their car more often to retrieve purses and money, stay out of the weather, or care for children.

Out of an estimated 16 to 18 billion fuelings a year in the United States, most are safe,

nonevents that pose no danger to consumers. But, according to Renkes, all motorists should be aware of the potential that re-entering their car will create static electricity that can cause a fire.

"We are launching a public information program to get the word out," Renkes said. "Our message is simple -- stop static. Some retailers have placed signs on gasoline pumps notifying consumers of the danger, but motorists don't always read pump signs."

The Petroleum Equipment Institute, based in Tulsa, is the international trade association for distributors, manufacturers and installers of equipment used in petroleum marketing and liquid-handling operations, as well as operations and engineering personnel from the petroleum marketing industry. Users of the equipment include service station and convenience store owners, terminals, bulk plants and airport refueling operations. The Institute is comprised of more than 1,550 companies engaged in the manufacture and distribution of equipment used in petroleum marketing operations. For more information, please call (918) 494-9696, or visit www.pei.org.

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